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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000721

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/07/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [MOPS](#) [ET](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA/ERITREA: NORWEGIAN PERSPECTIVE ON A WAY
FORWARD

REF: A. OSLO 161

[1](#)B. ADDIS 456

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: Norwegian Ambassador Jens-Peter Kjemprud and the Norwegian Charge in Asmara, Arman Aardal, told Ambassador that they still hold out hope for moving forward on resolution of the Eritrea-Ethiopia border dispute, but that relations must improve between Eritrea and the U.S. before this can happen. The discussion between Eritrean Presidential advisor Yemane Ghebreab with Special Envoy Andrew Natsios in Oslo on Feb 10 was a start for this process (ref A). Norway believes that if Eritrea reaches out to the U.S., relations can improve and thus improve the prospects for resolving the border conflict. While Ambassador noted that the U.S. will not take the lead in any peace talks, the U.S. looks to Norway and others to take the lead. Norway believes that improved U.S.-Eritrean relations will help other countries engage in the peace process. The issue of the missing British Embassy diplomats being held reportedly by Afar rebels along or inside Eritrea was discussed. The Norwegians are recommending to the Eritreans that they allow full access by UNMEE aircraft and other nations (like the U.S. and British) to search the area for the missing British diplomats. According to the Norwegians, this would be a sure signal that the Eritreans want to engage the West in a positive manner since the British abduction situation is purely a humanitarian issue. Post and Embassy Asmara are not so sure that GSE cooperation on the missing diplomats would signal a real shift in approach toward the West, nor do they share the GON's optimism that such a change of heart is likely any time soon. End Summary.

Never Give Up Hope

2 (S) Norwegian Ambassador to Ethiopia and former special envoy for the Horn of Africa, Jens-Peter Kjemprud and visiting Norwegian Charge to Eritrea called on Ambassador March 7 to raise their hopes for resolving the Eritrea-Ethiopia border conflict. More importantly, they wanted to pass messages to us that they believe Eritrea may be ready to re-engage in the process. Kjemprud said that the key was improving U.S.-Eritrean relations. Ambassador reiterated that the U.S. will not take the lead and would look to Norway and others to play the leading role. Kjemprud

noted that improved engagement between the U.S. and Eritrea would help attract international support and engagement, because it is the U.S., as architect of the Algiers Accord, that Eritrea points to as key to any peace in the region.

13. (S) Kjemprud and the Charge explained that during a visit to Eritrea by the Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister on January 23, President Isaias agreed to send his advisor, Yemane Ghebreab, to Oslo to discuss the border as well as foreign relations issues. In Oslo, Kjemprud noted that the Norwegian side made clear to Yemane that Norway wants to help ease tensions in the Horn of Africa, push for resolution of the Eritrea-Ethiopia border conflict and wanted Eritrea to improve relations with the U.S. as key to resolving the border and tensions in the Horn. The Norwegians noted that Eritrea should do four things: lift restrictions on visas for Americans and other nationalities, do not tamper with diplomatic pouch from any country, lower the negative propaganda against the West, and improve relations with the U.S. and other countries.

14. (S) According to the Norwegians, Yemane met with Special Envoy Andrew Natsios (ref A) in Oslo on Feb 10. This was the first approach to a senior U.S. official by Eritrea in some time. As Oslo reported, Yemane raised bilateral relations in very general terms. The Norwegians felt the meeting was a good first step by Eritrea to engage the U.S. on bilateral relations. Yemane is currently in Chad meeting with rebel groups from Darfur and will return to Eritrea on March 12, according to the Norwegians. At that time, the Norwegians will discuss with Yemane if Eritrea is willing to improve relations with the U.S. and engage on the border question.

ADDIS ABAB 00000721 002 OF 002

Eritrea Still Has a Bad Image

15. (S) The Norwegians told the Ambassador that Eritrea remains an obstacle in Somalia, noting arms shipment by Eritrea to Somalia. Eritrea will need to stop its unhelpful activities in Somalia and Darfur. The Norwegians remarked the human rights report from the U.S. which cited Eritrea for its poor record, underscores Eritrea's poor image internationally and specifically with the U.S.

16. (S) The issue of the missing British diplomats was raised and that Eritrea could play a positive role in helping the British with information to determine if the perpetrators are Afar rebel groups. Djibouti and Ethiopia were being helpful, the Ambassador noted. Further, Eritrea had not granted flight clearance for UNMEE or the British or U.S. to fly in the area in search of the diplomats. The Norwegians told the Ambassador they were going to raise with the Eritreans the need for them to fully cooperate in the search and to be helpful to the British. This could help, Kjemprud noted, in demonstrating that Eritrea wants to ease tensions with the West and begin a positive dialogue with the West.

Comment: Norwegians Overly Optimistic

17. (S) The Norwegians strongly feel that the Eritreans, especially Yemane, want to re-engage on the border and to improve relations with the U.S. specifically and other Western countries in general. Ambassador made it clear that U.S. is looking to other countries to take the lead. Kjemprud feels that progress can be made and that Norway will continue to work with Eritrea. He hopes that if Eritrea re-engages on the border and makes positive overtures to the U.S. that the U.S. would support Norway's efforts. Neither post nor Embassy Asmara share the GON's optimism about prospects for a change of heart in the GSE, however.

18. (U) Embassy Asmara cleared this message.
YAMAMOTO